

CITIZENS FOR FARM LABOR: A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, PURPOSES AND POLICIES.

I. Preamble.

In the recent words of the Welfare Study Commission of the State of California, "One occupational group in California is so deeply locked in poverty that it is set off from all others: farm laborers and their families". Periodically, California rediscovers that it has an agricultural labor "problem", of which poverty is the most conspicuous aspect. Agricultural workers' poverty is reflected in substandard housing, food and medical care, inadequate education, child labor, and other indices.

But poverty is a symptom. The more basic disability of agricultural workers--the reason why they are impoverished by comparison with other occupational groups--is that they are not free. The salvation of America's economic system is that it has been accompanied by a political system under which working men have been generally free to complain about grievances, free to associate with those with similar grievances, free to publish their views, free to form political instruments, free to withhold their labor, free in other vital ways.

These saving freedoms, one might think, apply to all working men and women in this country, under a Constitution which calls for equal protection of the law. But social, labor, civil rights, and immigration laws do not apply equally to all workers. Agricultural workers are uniquely singled out for exclusion from wage and hour laws, unemployment insurance laws, child labor laws, collective bargaining laws, and even California's Fair Employment Practices Act. And, since the first codified Immigration Act in 1885, agriculture has been the only industry in which captive foreign labor has been tolerated. Whether Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, "wet-backs", braceros, or "green carders", the effect has been the same: to reduce domestic agricultural workers, and small farmers and their unpaid family helpers, to the level of servitude which foreign contract workers have been desperate enough to accept.

Citizens For Farm Labor is committed to the removal of these injustices. But the kind of justice in which we believe is not ultimately conferred by kindly churchgoers, college professors, doctors, lawyers, government agencies, growers, or by anyone else. It is won, and continually won again, by men who are free to win it for themselves. The road to justice for agricultural workers--justice in the meaningful sense--is the road of freedom for agricultural workers--freedom in the meaningful sense. Not the catchword which is flung about recklessly by a farm lobby to justify its economic interests, or demagogues whose actual intent is the opposite of freedom, but freedom in the sense of control by men over their own lives.

The task of those who care most deeply about the poverty of farm workers is not so much to attack poverty in our fields as to attack bondage in our fields. We of Citizens for Farm Labor conceive our basic task to be removal of the barricades of bondage which have been erected around agricultural workers. The only solution to bondage is liberation. Our goal is liberation of agricultural workers to assemble, to petition, to vote, to speak, to listen, to decide, to act on their own behalf. When agricultural workers--or anybody else--are truly free in such ways as these, they shall no longer be locked in poverty, in the material or in any other sense. When agricultural workers are free, they will demand justice in their own name. And they will be heard.

II. General Purposes and Policies.

In working toward the goal of equal rights for agricultural laborers, Citizens for Farm Labor is committed to means which are compatible with this end: suasion as opposed to coercion; non-violence as opposed to violence; democracy as opposed to authoritarianism.

We will act as an independent voice, truly representing citizens of California from a variety of walks of life, not dominated by or beholden to any political party, religious denomination, labor organization, government agency, or other interest group.

We will work for a social climate favorable to farm workers' efforts toward self-help, in such basic ways as public education, political action, legal aid, organization liaison. Our activities will expand or change as circumstances may indicate, and as we attract members with particular skills and interests.

III. Core Structure and Activities.

- A. Advisory Board
- B. Executive Committee (Chairman, Secretary-Treasurer, Chairmen and Co-Chairmen of all standing committees)
- C. Publications Committee (issues a monthly magazine, Farm Labor, and occasional flyers, research papers, and other materials)
- D. Legal Committee (does legal research, files briefs amicus, initiates constitutional suits and writs)
- E. Political Action Committee (seeks extension of collective bargaining, unemployment insurance, FEPC, child labor laws, and Fair Labor Standards Act to agricultural workers; seeks removal of discriminatory legislation, including Public Law 78; presents testimony at public hearings; works with Friends Committee on Legislation, Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, Mexican-American Political Association, California Democratic Council, and other organizations with a similar legislative program)
- F. Publicity Committee (issues press releases, maintains clipping service, prepares radio and television programs)
- G. General membership (meetings every month)

(NOTE: The foregoing is a description of the structure and activities of CFL as of the first six months of its existence: October, 1963 - February, 1964.)